

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN

Report of the Proceedings of the 73rd Annual Conference held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C. 1 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 8th, 9th and 10th April, 1977

ATTENDANCE

FRIDAY a.m. 14 Branches represented, 26 Delegates present.
(Not represented Bolton, Lancaster & S.W. London Brs).
FRIDAY p.m. 17 Branches represented, 34 Delegates present.
(Not represented, Lancaster Br).
SATURDAY p.m. 17 Branches represented, 35 Delegates present.
(Not represented, Lancaster Br).
SUNDAY a.m. 16 Branches represented, 35 Delegates present.
(Not represented, Lancaster & S.W. London Brs).
SUNDAY p.m. 16 Branches represented, 35 Delegates present.
(Not represented, Lancaster & W. London Brs).

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME

Collections	£117-65
"	23-00
Lit. Sales	66-00
Canteen Surplus	27-15
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	234-70
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EXPENDITURE

Hall Hire	£278-00
Tips	6-00
Delegates' expenses	54-00
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	338-00
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FRIDAY Proceedings commenced at 10.50 a.m.

CHAIR: Cde. A. George was elected to the Chair on a MOTION of Cottis (Southend Br) and Ambridge (Swansea Br). Carried 22-0.

DEPUTY CHAIR Cde. A. Waite (Camden Br) and Robertson (Oxford Br). Carried 20-0.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE reported that four Branches required permission of Delegates to sit. Birmingham, Haringey and Southend had returned Forms C late and explanations had been received.

MOTION (Robertson, Oxford Br) and Mattingley, Mid. Herts. Br) "That the Delegates be allowed to sit". Agreed

W. Yorks Branch had only recently been formed.

MOTION (Cottis, Southend Br. & Robertson, Oxford Br) "That the W. Yorks Delegates be allowed to sit". Carried 20-0

TELLERS It was agreed that Standing Orders act as Tellers.

E.C. REPORT to CONFERENCE

E.C. Attendances: No discussion

Branch Membersip: No discussion

Agenda Resolution (Camden Br): "That the following two paragraphs be added to Conference and Delegate Meeting Standing Orders:

- (1) On an Item for Discussion, included on the formal Agenda for the Meeting being placed before the delegates, the Chairman shall allow a period of general discussion on the Item before accepting any specific resolution on the subject.
- (2) The meeting shall finish not later than 6 p.m. on each day and meetings shall automatically stand adjourned at the time shown on the Agenda. An extension of these time limits, restricted to not more than 30 minutes, shall only be allowed if a majority of the total delegate strength of Branches represented during the course of the meeting is in favour of such an extension. Any proposition to this effect shall be voted by the delegates without discussion".

LOST 17 - 17

Amendment (Glasgow Br): "On line one, delete the words 'two paragraphs' and insert the word 'paragraph'. Delete the whole of the first clause (part '1')".

LOST 11-23

Discussion was brief. A Camden delegate hoped that Clause 1 would be self-explanatory, and said that Clause 2 was intended to deal with the fact that some delegates had to leave before the end of discussion if it went on indefinitely. On the one hand the point was put that discussion sometimes does not get off the ground until a Resolution has been framed; on the other hand, it was said that discussion is sometimes curtailed by the putting of a resolution straightaway. After the taking of the vote a Mid. Herts. delegate raised a question about the voting strength of Central Branch. In reply, Central Br. Joint Sec. explained that some members of the Branch asked that ballot papers should not be sent to them. On this occasion 120 papers had been sent but only 16 had been returned.

The Chair then welcomed Comrade L. Fenton, Fraternal Delegate from the World Socialist Party of the United States.

Next a procedural question was raised about the Directing Resolution from Mid. Herts. Br. concerning an Amendment to Rule 6 placed on the Agenda by Westminster Br. One delegate thought the Directing Resolution attempted to do Standing Orders Committee's work for it and that it should have come between the Preliminary and Final Agenda. It was agreed by delegates to defer consideration until Amendments to Rules were dealt with.

AGENDA RESOLUTION 2A (Swansea Br): "This Conference instructs the E.C. to set up a committee to examine and suggest improvements in Party Administration and to report back to Conference or Delegate Meeting". LOST 15-23

The mover argued that there was criticism of administration, not the Object or D. of P, within the Party. He was concerned about the report which resulted from a Conference instruction and showed an enormous room for improvement. A number of factors needed examination, such as why members were lost as a result of disagreement with the E.C. It was also time to look at the construction of the E.C. Did we need 14 members meeting weekly? Were there not other methods of administration instead? So what was being suggested was a committee which might come up with results which the E.C. would not agree with. The Party and delegates should decide what changes occurred. A large amount of Party activity came from H.O. and it would be healthier if Branches did this. One delegate said that his Branch was opposed to the Resolution because they would not trust the E.C. to set up a committee and felt they already had too much say in the Party. There was frustration in the Branches, for example, when Branch letters were 'noted' by the E.C. Another delegate agreed and said his Branch would like to see the Branches, which were the unit of organisation, pooling their ideas on Party organisation. Members with different ideas should not be condemned and called anti-Party. A number of delegates raised the possibility of restructuring the E.C. by having monthly meetings and leaving sub-committees to get on with their job, by having an E.C. member from each Branch. One E.C. member said that the inference was that if the E.C. were changed we would cease to lose members, but no correlation had been established between the two things. The Party should not be subjected to another examination of its internal machinery. The Resolution would not stimulate members to be more active; it would encourage the idea that activity consists in attacks on the E.C. Another member said that Branch resolutions were noted when there was not sufficient agreement about what action should be taken and the E.C. then waited to see what the reaction of Branches was. Every General Secretary for the last 12 years had been faced with the problem of business piling up. E.C. sub-committees should be reduced to 6 or 7, containing more members with wider responsibilities, and run on a budget basis. The Party officers could act as a general purpose committee to keep routine matters off the E.C. table. In reply to a question, the Gen. Sec. said it was not his impression that the reason for noting a Branch Resolution was always that which had been suggested. In winding up, the mover said that it had not been the aim of the Resolution to attack the E.C. and that it would be constructive to set up a committee to look at administration.

AMENDMENTS to RULE

Rule 1. (Swansea Br): "Delete from lines 9,10 and 11 all the words from '...subject' to '...the Branch' inclusive".

The question was raised whether the Rule was changed by a Party Poll. One delegate said he had no recollection of a poll on this part of the Rule and thought a vote should be taken, which could be overruled if necessary. The Chair ruled that consideration be deferred until it had been ascertained whether there had been a Party Poll.

Rule 3. (Camden Br): "Delete the whole of the last sentence (commencing 'A member leaving...') and substitute with 'A member shall cease membership on taking up residence abroad'". LOST 10-34

Two E.C. members expressed the hope that the Branch would give an explanation why they wanted the Rule changed back, but after little discussion a Resolution that the vote be taken was CARRIED overwhelmingly.

Rule 6 DIRECTING RESOLUTION (Mid.Herts.Br): re the Westminster Br. Amendment/Addendum to Rule 6, below: "This Conference directs the Chair-comrade to take these proposals on Group status and organisation as a Conference Resolution, not as an Amendment/Addendum to Rule 6". LOST 17-27

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 1-00 p.m. and RECONVENED at 2-15 p.m.

Conference was then addressed by Cde.L.Fenton, Fraternal Delegate from the World Socialist Party of the U.S. He spoke of missing those comrades who were no longer alive and reported on activities being carried out by our American Companion Party. These included weekly radio programmes in Boston and Tucson. One of the scripts appeared in the current Western Socialist, which it was generally thought was now a much better job.

AMENDMENTS to RULE (contd):

Rule 6 (Westminster Br): (Addendum, as a second para., to be marked '(b)'. The existing first para. to be marked '(a)'). - "Groups shall consist of Party members only. Subject to E.C. approval, they may be formed by not less than three members with a view to the eventual formation of a Branch. They shall organise meetings and propaganda activity under the auspices of the E.C. Non-members shall be encouraged to attend meetings and participate in discussions, but decisions on Group activity shall be taken by a vote of Party members only. Groups shall not take part in determining organisational or policy matters; this function shall remain with Branches, the constitutional units of the Party".

LOST 18-26

AMENDMENT (Mid.Herts Br): "At the end of the third sentence delete 'E.C.' and insert 'their Branch or Branches'".

LOST 11-33

Rule 10 (Mid.Herts Br): "Delete the word 'Groups' on line one".

LOST 15-28.

The movers argued that previous discussion had confirmed that the Party did not wish to introduce a new unit of organisation, and this Rule was the only one which referred to Groups.

RULE 12 (Swansea Br): "Add at the end 'Members shall not serve on the E.C. for more than three successive years; after which, such members shall be ineligible to serve on the E.C. during the following two years'". (If carried, this addendum to operate as from Jan. 1978).

LOST 13-30

RULE 12 (Oxford Br): "On line two, after the word 'Party', insert the sentence 'Members shall not serve on the E.C. for more than three successive years. But if in the elections for the 1978, '79 or '80 E.Cs there are more than five members who have sat on the E.C. for three or more years, then only the five longest serving members need stand down'".

LOST 6-37

Amendment (Swansea Br): "Delete all after '...three successive years' at the end of the first sentence".

LOST 4-37.

RULE 12 (Haringey Br): "Add at the end 'No member shall serve on the E.C. if he/she has served on both the two immediate preceding E.Cs for any period'. (If carried, this addendum to operate as from January 1977 with the 74th E.C. counting as the first of 'the two immediately preceding E.Cs referred to)'".

LOST 6-37.

There was a lengthy discussion. One delegate argued that the E.C. was responsible for important decisions about the form and content of propaganda, which must inspire and attract people; but E.Cs tended to be unimaginative and dogmatic, concerned with witch-hunting and their own egos. Their inept performance over the last few years could hardly be worse. Another said that no-one joined

with any view of altering the rules relating to the E.C. but over the years he had come to see why people felt strongly about what was happening to the Party. Members thought the E.C. was having far too much say in the Party. There was widespread dissatisfaction, as for example, with the E.C.'s deleting Resolutions from Conference Agenda and an item from the Central Organiser's report. In reply to this a delegate argued that if the E.C. was not in the Party's control this was the Party's fault, and another supported this, saying that it was another matter if we wished to alter the construction of the E.C. on a Branch or regional basis, but we should not simply deny ourselves a choice. The point was made several times that a better E.C. would not necessarily result if the rules were altered, and that there had not always been 14 members who wished to serve on the E.C. Two delegates said that in the present circumstances the E.C. was bound to be London-based. There was discussion whether passing the amendments would be undemocratic. Some argued that it would deny members the democratic right to nominate and elect those they wanted and that it would remove the equality of all Party members; this was challenged on the grounds that e.g. it was not open to all members to be Party candidates. An E.C. member said that members should choose the best candidate for the work of the E.C. and the amendments would replace this with selection on a mechanical basis. Other E.C. members made a number of points. One said he had refused to serve on the E.C. two years running, another that if E.C. members influenced Party decisions then so did speakers, writers and active Branch members. A delegate replied that speakers and writers were themselves controlled by the E.C. It was pointed out by another E.C. member that the E.C. does not consist of the same members year after year in any case; it was necessary to have the older experienced members, and when the E.C. made wrong decisions Conference would tell them. Another point raised was the knowledge which members have of E.C. members. A delegate said they were forced to vote for the familiar names. An E.C. member pointed out that there had recently been more divisions on E.C. resolutions, so it was open to members to take note of them and vote for E.C. candidates accordingly. This was challenged by a second E.C. member who said that little could be learned in this way since E.C. members might be on the same side of a division but for opposite reasons. A third E.C. member pointed out that in the past Branches had written to E.C. members asking them to justify their attitude. A fourth thought the Party should think of ways of removing financial and other obstacles to membership of the E.C. by provincial Party members.

RULE 14 (Oxford Br): "On line four, after the word 'principle' insert the sentence 'Information on how individual E.C. members have voted on particular issues shall be supplied to Branches on request'. And on the same line delete the word 'They...' and substitute with 'The E.C.'". LOST 19-22

Discussion was brief. The view was expressed several times that members were entitled to as much information as possible, but doubts were expressed about the practicability of the proposed amendment. It was pointed out that provision already existed in Rule 14 for the recording of voting on matters of principle and policy.

CONFERENCE THEN NOTED FRATERNAL GREETINGS FROM COMRADE G.R. RUSSELL

FLOOR RES: Devereux & Waters, Camden Br: "This conference asks the E.C. to look at means of implementing the first sentence of Rule 14". CARRIED 20-1

AGENDA RES. 3 (S.W. London Br): "This Conference instructs the E.C. to record a division (how each E.C. member votes) on all matters regarding Party policy which are the subjects of E.C. Resolutions". CARRIED 35-8

ITEM for DISCUSSION 1 (Westminster Br): "The existing Rule 22 limits a Branch with 22 members to the same minimum of 2 delegates and 2 votes at Conference as a Branch with only 6 members. Should not Branch voting strength more accurately reflect Branch membership? Amending Rule 22 would achieve this; by, for instance, changing 'twenty' to 'ten' on line two".

There was very little discussion and delegates appeared not to favour the suggestion.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 5-55 p.m.

SATURDAY

PROCEEDINGS RECOMMENCED at 1-45 p.m.

AGENDA RES. 2b (Hampstead Br): "This Conference instructs the E.C. to consider fully the Report and Observations of the Survey Committee. The E.C. to report its findings and any proposals to the 1977 ADM". LOST 15-24

The movers argued that everyone was agreed that there was a need for investigation into Party organisation and propaganda and that this should be based on the Survey and Report, which was all we had to go on. We now had some statistics which should not be ignored. There was little further discussion. One delegate said his Branch was in favour of action being taken in relation to the Report but thought the resolution from Hampstead Br. was not the way to do so.

ITEM for DISCUSSION e) (Westminster Br): "What conclusions should we draw from the statistical report of the Propaganda Survey?"

ITEM for DISCUSSION (Camden Br): "The Propaganda Survey and Report"

A Camden Br. delegate said the Branch had felt the Item should be there because not much was achieved if it was left to the E.C. The Branch had no specific proposals but thought other comrades should take the opportunity to make them. An E.C. member said he had originally been sceptical about the Report but now thought it worthwhile. One of the authors of the report thought there was danger of discussion being shallow. They were not interested in members saying they had done a good job but in the setting up of a working committee to look at the Report in a way in which Conference itself could not. There had been an allegation from an E.C. member that people had motives for pushing propaganda in a certain direction. That gave all the more reason to set up a committee to say what was wrong with the Report. A Westminster delegate said it was not the job of the E.C. to examine its own report; it was for Branches to put forward suggestions. His own Branch raised a number of queries. Since adverts. in the Press had attracted a quarter of new members, should there be more adverts? Since about half the members had come into contact through the Labour Party should there be more effort in that direction? On a point of information an E.C. member pointed out that the actual number of those joining through adverts. was fourteen.

FLOOR RES. (Waters, Camden & Coleman, Hampstead): "That this Conference proposes that a committee be set up to make some specific propaganda proposals arising out of the results of the Survey Report"

ADDENDUM (Davies & Howard, Westminster): ".....and seek the views of Branches". CARRIED 28-1

AMENDMENT (Fleming, Glasgow Br. & between "set up" and "to" insert 'by Conference'. LOST 13-18
Sub-Res. CARRIED 24-8

The movers argued that the Survey had attempted to show where members came from and what they were doing now. This could be investigated as a source of potential material for the Party. With

regard to the Amendment, one delegate queried whether Conference could set up a committee, rather than the E.C. itself or through canvassing Branches; another delegate argued that it was difficult but not impossible for Conference to do this.

AGENDA RES. 2c (Glasgow Br): "That those members who left Gr. Britain before Rule 3 was changed at Conference 1974 and who otherwise meet the conditions of Rule 2 shall be eligible to re-apply for membership of the Party".

CARRIED 36-7

The movers argued that those members who had left before the change to Rule 3, and who lived where there was no Companion Party, should have the chance to come back in. A number of questions were asked about how many ex-members were involved, how many had re-applied since the Rule was changed and whether they had been admitted. An E.C. member reported that there had been one application from an ex-member who had to resign on taking up residence abroad. This had been rejected by the E.C. on the grounds that the change to Rule could not be allowed to apply retrospectively. A member from the floor said that a number of ex-members would re-apply if they knew they could.

ITEM for DISCUSSION 1) (Westminster Br): Is it necessary, or desirable or in the best interests of the democratic structure of the Party for the E.C. to continue to have the authority to delete, amend, relegate, refer back or endorse material submitted by Branches to the Standing Orders Committee for inclusion on Conference and ADM Agendas? Or should it be left to the discretion of the S.O. Committee to ask the E.C. for guidance only when serious misgivings about an item have been unresolved with the Branch concerned?"

It was agreed by delegates that the Item be taken with the Central Organiser's Report to Conference and his complaint concerning the E.C.'s deletion of a paragraph from his Report. A Westminster delegate said the Item arose from the E.C.'s action last year over the Resolution concerning groups, but the point was general. A second delegate thought the item was wrongly framed in implying that the E.C. already had the authority in question, and a third argued that the E.C. were ignoring an instruction from Conference. Two Conferences ago a Resolution had been carried unanimously telling the E.C. they had no authority to interfere with a report from a Branch. The Party Officers were appointed by the Party and so they should report direct. The Standing Orders Cttee. should receive all reports and refer them to the comrades or Branch reporting, if they find fault with them. A member of the Standing Orders Cttee. read out the Committee's Terms of Reference, and in answer to a query whether they were laid down by Conference said they were described as "as agreed by the E.C. in 1971". He said the Cttee. and Westminster Br. were asking Conference whether it was satisfied with the situation suggested in the Item and whether it was happy with the present situation where the E.C. have the authority to re-arrange things. One delegate said the Terms of Ref. were unambiguous; only where the Standing Orders Cttee. wanted to alter something did it need to consult with the E.C. Three delegates argued that neither S.O. Cttee. nor the E.C. should have this power, but only Conference. One E.C. member said that the discussion at the E.C. concerning the C.O.'s Report had not been the basis of the S.D. Cttee's Terms of Ref. but Rules 17 and 19; the first rule was unclear but the second was unambiguous and did not even require the C.O. to show his Report to the E.C. Another said that Conference could not decide what was in order because the E.C. had to provide Branches with a workable agenda for instructed delegates. Branches sometimes sent resolutions which did conflict with Rule and the E.C. had to arrive at an agenda which was not confusing. A third said he had voted for deleting a paragraph of the C.O.'s Report on the grounds that he had commented on a matter which he should have raised at a Branch. A fourth said he had

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been critical of the Central Organiser over this matter but had voted against deletion on the basis of economy. Another delegate thought the C.O. should in future not show his report to the E.C. but report direct to Conference. An E.C. member said that previous Conferences had expressed the view that the Gen.Sec. was to be the E.C.'s secretary, not the Party's. The Gen.Sec. pointed out that what Conference had expressed a view on was whether the Gen.Sec. should take minutes at E.C. meetings, not on the wider question of whether Party officers should report direct to Conference. Delegates disagreed over whether the E.C.'s action in the particular case had been pettifoggish or not.

FLOOR RES (Moss & Ambridge, Swansea Br): This Conference deplores the action of the E.C. in deleting a section from the C.O.'s Report to Conference and informs the E.C. that it has no authority in any way to alter reports submitted to Conference by Party Officers."

CARRIED 21-7

sub-Res: CARRIED 22-5

The movers argued that it was open to delegates to move amendments if they did not like the second clause of the Floor Res. but it was designed to prevent the E.C. from acting in this way again. There were already safeguards in the S.O.Ctee's Terms of Ref. and any suggested alterations could be brought to Conference itself. Not to condemn the E.C. would be to lose a very good Central Organiser and to go against Party democracy by allowing the E.C. to interfere with Conference as they liked. In reply, another delegate pointed out that the Item for Discussion specifically referred to the removal etc. of Items and Resolutions; the question of deletion from a Report was a separate one and should be dealt with separately. The Resolution passed at the 13th E.C. meeting showed that the E.C. were interpreting Rule and trying to act in accordance with it, and it was an unfortunate situation that the E.C. and the C.O. were now at odds. One E.C. member argued that if Conference said that Party Officers could report what they liked, even if it was outside their Terms of Ref, then there were two levels of administration in the Party; the E.C. who were responsible under Rule and Party Officers who could use their Reports as propaganda vehicles for what they felt strongly about. This was what the C.O. had done. The deleted part of his report dealt with the list of suppliers appearing in the "S.S", and this was not his province. Support had then been worked up in Branches against the action taken by the E.C. in sanctioning the non-appearance of the list in the "S.S". The E.C. would not interfere with a factual report which was within the Terms of Ref. of the Party Officer submitting it. A second E.C. member agreed with this. He thought that perhaps the E.C. on this occasion ought not to have done what it did but it was dealing with a unique situation. The C.O. had an anti-E.C. infection. Conference should deal with this particular issue and not say that the E.C. can never alter things. Two delegates argued that if anything in a report seemed incorrect or out of order it was Standing Orders Committee's opinion that was paramount, and they should put their view before Conference for the delegates to decide. One delegate said there was no question of the E.C. deliberately trying to distort the report. Another said he would vote against the Resolution because it was wrong to tie the E.C.'s hands in relation to Rule 19 and to give Party Officers means which other members did not have. A third read out the C.O.'s Terms of Ref. and argued that he had in any case been acting within them. The movers of the Amendment argued that it was important to stress that the E.C. had acted honestly.

E.C. REPORT TO CONFERENCE (Contd):

Famphlets Committee: One delegate raised the question why an offer of a translation of a Dutch leaflet had been turned down. In reply, a member of the Committee said that it used to be the

practice to get translations from Party members but there had been complaints about their quality. The Committee had gone to the E.C. and suggested getting professional translators whose work was then put to Party members to check. The E.C. had agreed and so far there had not been a single complaint about translation undertaken in this way.

A delegate raised the question of the draft pamphlet on Trade Unions. A member of the Cttee. reported that the E.C. had decided not to use the draft and the Gen.Sec. read out a circular to Branches from the E.C. stating that the draft could not be proceeded with because it had come to light that it was written not by the Party member who had submitted it but by a non-member (A. Buick, a former member of the Party). A delegate asked for confirmation of the statement made in the circular that the author had written for an opponent journal and in reply, another delegate cited the Winter edition of Critique which he said was a journal of the C.P.G.B. An E.C. member said that this journal was published by the Trotskyist Ernest Mandel in Brussels. (Note from Gen.Sec: the journal is published in Scotland and is described as "an independent journal devoted to a critical analysis of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and to further development of Marxist theory"). A Cttee. member cited Revolutionary Communism and Libertarian Communism and said that extracts from the author's Irish pamphlet had appeared in Libertarian Communism Nos. 6 and 7. A delegate said that talk of contributing to an opponent journal suggested being in cahoots with it and anti-S.P.G.B; but the author had put the Party's case in Critique. It could have been published in the "S.S" and members should know that. There followed further questions. One delegate said that Comrade Brown said he had revised Buick's pamphlet before the author was known, was the draft in line with the synopsis agreed by the E.C. and would the Committee have recommended publication? In reply, a member of the Committee said that technically the draft was not in line with the synopsis, but that was unimportant. The pamphlet required an enormous amount of work and its main case was not the Party's case, though it might be a position held by some members. The reader would get the impression from the pamphlet that Trade Unions had done very little. A delegate asked whether the draft was now acceptable. Would the Party not be wasting work because a member went abroad and had to resign under the old Rule 3? A member of the Cttee. replied that the draft was not finished. When it had become known that it was written by a non-member the Committee thought it best to go to the E.C. The E.C. had asked Cde. Brown whether he had in fact written it and thought Branches should get the whole story. He added that this particular draft had not been solicited. One delegate thought it a strange criterion not to look at the correctness of statements but at who wrote them; a second asked which of these had been the grounds for rejection. A Cttee. member replied that the E.C. had decided solely on grounds of authorship. In reply to a question whether the Party now had a principle that we only published material from members. A Cttee. member said that it was a principle that written propaganda came from individuals under the control of the Party. A delegate said that in the early days the Party had published work by Morris, Kautsky and Marx and Engels. A synopsis of Buick's Irish pamphlet had appeared in Libertarian Communism but without his permission. Extracts from this pamphlet had been published in the "S.S" and the reasons for the Party's not publishing it were technical ones, to do with its length, historical aspects etc. He could see the E.C.'s point, however; it would be best for Branches to consider the E.C.'s circular and the Item for Discussion about articles in the "S.S" from non-members, then action could be taken one way or the other. An E.C. member replied that we had not published but had distributed material by people like Morris, et al; and that it was not true that extracts from the Irish pamphlet had been published in the "S.S". Rather, articles had appeared but the existence of a pamphlet at that time had not been known. The question of the pamphlet had arisen because

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Cde. Brown had submitted an article to the S.S.P.C. which the Cttee. knew was not his own work. He said he was sorry about this but by that time the Cttee. had discovered they had already published another article. The Pamphlet Committee's time had been wasted when authors within the Party were available. Another E.C. member urged delegates to think carefully before saying that material from non-members should be published.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 6.00 p.m.

SUNDAY CONFERENCE RECOMMENCED at 10.59 p.m.

E.C. Report (Contd):

Tapes Committee: It was agreed by the delegates that congratulations were in order for the Committee's fine job of work.

Premises Committee: Delegates noted the vast improvements which had been brought about and again agreed that the Committee were to be congratulated.

Financial Report: In reply to a question one of the auditors said that the deficit of £3,000 on the Lit. Account came from the deficit on the "S.S.". The Treasurer said that with £5,000 in the Deposit Account there was barely enough money for one year's "S.S"s. Sometimes as much as £400 was received at H.O. in one week, but even this was not enough and it was necessary to think seriously of a very special effort to improve the Party's financial position. Conference should discuss this.

Central Branch Secretaries: It was agreed to take this report with ITEM FOR DISCUSSION a) (Swansea Br): "The sparse contact between Central Branch members and the rest of the Party".

A Swansea Br. delegate said that the Item had been put down to initiate discussion and not by way of criticism of the C.B. Secs. During 1976 when he had been on the Education Cttee. and started a correspondence it had been discovered that there were a number of C.B. members who were hungry for knowledge and isolated from the rest of the Party. It might be possible for individual members or Branches to make contact with a C.B. member. His own Branch had done this with the result that the member had joined the Branch. Another delegate agreed and suggested that areas could be allocated to members to cover.

FLOOR RES. (Robertson & Burls, Oxford Br): "This Conference recommends that a list of all names and addresses of C.B. members be circulated to every Branch with a view to making closer contacts with each other".

LOST 4-17

The movers recognised that some C.B. members might not want calls from other members, but in that case they need not be visited again. More C.B. members would welcome contact than not. A number of delegates expressed opposition to the Resolution on the grounds that there would be C.B. members who did not want their addresses circulated and that the Central Organiser and the C.B. Secs. were already carrying out the kind of function envisaged in the Resolution. One delegate suggested a link-up with the Tapes Cttee. in the possibility of a newsletter cassette. C.B. Sec. said that one of the questions on a recent questionnaire to C.B. members had asked them if they wanted more contact with other members in their area. Many did not, especially the elderly. Those who did tended to be more recent members. The Secretaries' conclusion had been that they should try to organise one area on an area basis. But there were problems with this because of members living over a scattered area. The E.C. had sanctioned a trial scheme in the South West, but this had to be abandoned because the member who had offered to be responsible had left the District.

Education Organiser: No discussion.

Library Committee: A member of the Cttee. said that members should contact the Cttee. if they had suggestions for book purchases.

Media Committee: From the floor a member called attention to the opportunity available to members, especially those in London, to participate in phone-in programmes. A number of delegates said that they were constantly trying to do this but it was a matter of luck whether they were successful. A Cttee. member agreed that this was important. There had originally been a lot of enthusiasm for the idea but most members had not persevered when plans had been circulated. With the G.L.C. Elections coming up it would make it easier for candidates to get interviews if the Party was already known through phone-ins. The Cttee. would also appreciate any other ideas which Branches had for exploiting the media. One delegate asked whether anyone had tried the Radio 4 programme where there was cross-discussion amongst those phoning in and a better opportunity to argue. A Cttee. member replied that Radio 4 wanted to know what question would be asked before they would let anyone on; this made it difficult but not impossible.

Publicity Committee: A delegate raised a question about a letter which had been written to the magazine "Time Out", and a member of the Cttee. said that this had been written following a request which had been made by the magazine for a 200-word item on Marxist literature.

Review Journals Secretary: No discussion

"S.S" Subs. Committee: One delegate raised a question concerning a Belgian magazine which received the "S.S", and a member from the floor said that it was not tied to any particular organisation, and claimed to be a digest of European left-wing organisations. He had seen no mention of the "S.S" in it. In reply to another question, a member of the Cttee. said that about 250 free copies of the "S.S" were sent out to libraries in the U.K. One delegate thought that copies should be sent to J.C.Rs in polytechnics and universities on the grounds that most literature going there was read. Another thought that addresses of universities in Russia should be utilised.

Overseas Contacts Secretary: No discussion

A. Westminster Br. delegate then raised a point about Item for Discussion j) and said that this had not been dealt with the previous day but only the point about the E.C's deletion from the Central Organiser's Report. The Chair ruled that the Branch had had ample opportunity to raise the matter on the previous day.

S.S. Production Committee: A delegate asked whether the Cttee. had any standard procedure for communicating with members who had submitted articles. Three members of his Branch had submitted articles with the result that in one case nothing had been heard for several months; then the article had appeared; in the second case there had been acknowledgment of the article, which had then appeared in modified form which the author would have opposed; and in the third case there had been no acknowledgment, and after several months the author wrote to ask whether the article had been received. The reply was that the Cttee. had, but had not yet discussed it because it was written instead of being typed. The Secretary had said that the author would hear further soon, but that had been in the previous November and nothing more had yet been heard. A Cttee. member said that sometimes the Cttee. would expect to use an article in the current month; then something might happen which resulted in its not going into the "S.S" and they might forget to write to the author. The Cttee. sometimes had to use its judgment. One of the cases cited was one where the author's articles were frequently rejected, so the Cttee. had tried to make something of the article.

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rather than just reject it. Another, where the article was held for several months, was a case where the article was not very good and the Cttee. wanted to make something out of it, but it was a matter of waiting until they had the time. Another problem was that articles were not always sent to the address given in the "S.S". If they were, the Secretary could send an acknowledgment more easily.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION d) (Westminster Br): "The question of articles by non-members in the "S.S".

Opening up, a Westminster Br. delegate said that the E.C. had recently been asked for a ruling on the question. (Note from the Gen. Sec: See Minutes of 2nd Meeting, 74th E.C. Item 3D, and 3rd Mtg. Item 2). His Branch agreed with the E.C.'s interpretation the gist of which was that articles should come from members except in particular circumstances. Another delegate thought the S.S.P.C. should be allowed to use their discretion.

FLOOR RES (Robinson & Weidberg, Hampstead Br): "This Conference believes that the criterion for publication of any article in the "S.S" should be that it advances the cause of Socialism in the opinion of the S.S.P.C. irrespective of whether the authors are members of the S.P.G.B".

LOST 16-16

AMENDMENT (Burls & Robertson, Oxford Br): "Delete 'in the opinion of the S.S.P.C'".

LOST 6-17

There was a very lengthy debate. The movers argued that it was the content of an article which mattered. The movers of the Amendment said that obviously the S.S.P.C. would in practice decide whether an article advanced the cause of Socialism, but that this should not be the criterion. Several delegates said they did not see the point of the Amendment. In reply to a question a member of the S.S.P.C. said that a few articles were received every year from people who just wanted to write a political article, but the Cttee. had never received an article which they would have wanted to publish. Several delegates thought members could supply all the articles needed and queried why a non-member capable of writing an article putting the Party's case should not already be a member. Some argued that there was specialised research which might be of use to the Party in propaganda; others that such information could be dug out by members in any case. The question of the Party's becoming associated with the non-Socialist views of a non-member was raised and some delegates thought this could be dealt with by publishing a disclaimer with any article by a non-member. Two delegates thought there was nothing at issue since an article from a non-member could always be published as a "letter" and the E.C. could in any case make exceptions to the general rule. (contd).

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 1.10 p.m. and RECONVENED at 2.00 p.m.

A member of the S.S.P.C. said there was a danger of forgetting that the Party was the only Socialist Party in the country and the "S.S" the only journal where the Socialist viewpoint was put; she would not have anything to do with the "S.S" if the Resolution were carried. Another member of the Cttee. discussed the history of the Party's attitude. The original notice in the first "S.S" soliciting articles from non-members had not been repeated, even though there had been a shortage of articles at times. The Party forbade members to write in opponents' journals regardless of what case they might put. The Investigation Cttee. into the "S.S" in 1969 had stressed the importance of convincing readers of the uniqueness of the Party's case, and this was borne in mind by the Cttee; if an article could equally appear in the 'New Statesman' then it was not thought right to publish it. A delegate pointed out that under Rule the Party did not forbid members to write in opponents' journals as long as they were writing in opposition. In the course of the discussion the

General Secretary read out the statement sent to a London Branch by the E.C. (since circulated to all Branches) and an E.C. member who was on the Editorial Cttee. when the present policy was evolving pointed out that the Committee had always sought the E.C.'s permission when it had wanted to publish an article by a non-member and given reasons for wanting to do so. Several delegates made reference to the former member, A. Bulck. Some thought the E.C.'s present attitude was designed to get at him, some thought that this was what the Resolution was about, and others took the view that the issue in the Resolution was what was important.

Central Lit. Sales Committee: No discussion.

Propaganda Committee: One delegate reported that his Branch was alarmed that the Propaganda Cttee. should make suggestions for speakers which were then turned down by the E.C.; they wondered if a Committee could efficiently do its work if the E.C. interfered in this way.

Parliamentary Committee: No discussion.

RESOLUTION (Robertson, Oxford Br. & Robinson, Mid. Herts. Br): "That the Report of the 74th E.C. to the 73rd Annual Conference be adopted". Agreed

ITEM for DISCUSSION h) (Westminster Br): "The E.C.'s statement on Violence".

Branches had only recently received copies of the E.C.'s statement, and a Resolution to discuss it was LOST 6-10.

ITEM for DISCUSSION c) (Westminster Br): "The commercial distribution of the "S.S.".

The Item was introduced by the Westminster delegate who had originally been engaged with Publications Distribution Ltd. in discussing their offer to carry the "S.S.". The Company delivered some 60 periodicals on a sale-or-return basis to 150 bookshops and 250 newsagents. National distribution was uneven, being concentrated in London, the Midlands and Yorks. and Lancs, and was being built up. The Company required to have a monopoly of stockists and their terms were 50% across the board. A majority of the E.C. had been in favour of a trial run. The delegate then answered a large number of questions on the matter. The period for terminating the contract was one month on either side. Direct sales by Branches and members were unaffected; if a number of outlets were unwilling to sell the "S.S." by receiving it from the Company, the Company would discuss the situation with us. Unsold back numbers would be picked up and returned at the same time as delivering the new number. The main restriction on members' sales would be that they would no longer be able to sell them to a newsagent. The fact that newsagents would receive less per copy under the proposed new arrangement had been discussed by the E.C. and a majority thought the opportunity for sales over a wider area overrode this. Initially the Company would take the number of the "S.S." currently supplied to bookshops and newsagents plus two or three hundred others in new shops. The scheme would begin in September. The mechanism for altering the number of "S.S." supplied was that the Company would inform us of sales month by month. One delegate thought there was no chance of commercial selling of the "S.S." unless it was produced for the commercial market. Another delegate thought the opportunity should be taken to consider the presentation of the "S.S." itself, especially the front cover. In the context of a bookshop, as opposed to an outdoor meeting, it would be possible to confuse the "S.S." with other journals; it was therefore important that it should be distinctive in appearance and also professional. This would include a more general account of what the Party stands for, which could not be got simply from the

branch type of the D. of P. An E.C. member said we had had an offer from a professional organisation, and it would be in their interests to see that the "S.S" got sold. A rep. going into a shop had pull in way in which an individual member of the Party did not. At the end of the discussion one delegate expressed himself satisfied with the answers to questions, on the grounds that the new arrangement would not interfere with traditional methods of selling the "S.S" at meetings, etc. but would rather enhance them. The name of the Party's journal would be seen in more than one place and this might encourage people to buy it at propaganda meetings.

BRANCH REPORTS and ITEM for DISCUSSION g) (S.W.London Br): "What propaganda work is being done outside of London and Glasgow? How can the situation be improved?"

Birmingham Br: There had been activity in the Bull Ring during during the previous summer, with help from members of Westminster Br. More and more members had become inactive and there was difficulty in getting a quorum at Branch meetings. There was still a problem of finding a suitable meeting place.

Bolton Br: There were 10 members; none had joined since the previous year, though some Lancaster members had joined through Bolton. One dozen "S.S" were sold.

Camden Br: There was one new member. 44 meetings at Tower Hill, with good literature sales. Branch members were also active on sub-Committees.

Edinburgh Br: There were meetings at the Mound and street and pub selling of the "S.S". The Branch had few members but the level of activity remained about the same.

Glasgow Br: 55 members. It had been difficult on occasions to get an audience for indoor meetings, but outdoor meetings had been better. Pub selling of the "S.S" had produced good results; speakers had been sent to Edinburgh and East Kilbride where there were lit. sales and two active members. A number of younger members were going to take the speakers' test. The Branch was marking time.

Hampstead Br: Constituted as a Branch in 1976. As a group there had been regular weekly meetings which had brought in visitors. Outdoor meetings had been held at Swiss Cottage and the Branch had supported outdoor meetings elsewhere. All Branch members were on sub-Committees. They had a full programme for the year and would be contesting the G.L.C. Election.

Haringey Br: The Branch had decreased from 25 to 22 members during the year. The "S.S" was sold to newsagents and only one propaganda meeting had been held. There had been difficulties over a Branch meeting place but one had been found now and activity had been resumed.

Lewisham Br: Lectures had increased the number of visitors. There was an active core of 10 out of 17 members. It was hoped to canvass the Bromley area.

Mid.Herts.Br: 14 members unchanged. Three were relatively young and active elsewhere for part of the year. There were regular fortnightly meetings. An outdoor meeting had been tried but this had been a failure and help was needed from the Propaganda Cttee. Six dozen "S.S" were sold.

Lancaster Br: Cde. Best (Bolton Br) reported that there was no longer a Branch. One member had left the district and others had lost interest. While the Branch existed it had been selling four dozen "S.S" and this had now dropped to 1 dozen.

Oxford Br: Members were very active and there was some difficulty in keeping a Branch. Attendance was good at fortnightly meetings. There were no speakers but good support from London members. Maximum sales were two dozen per month.

Redbridge Br: 27 members; £200 lit. sales over the year, particularly good at colleges but not too much success at factory gates. Attendance at outdoor meetings was good. There was a lot of canvassing and the Branch was looking up.

Southend Br: Attendance at the Branch was not very good and some members had left the district. There was regular canvassing with good sales, and success in sending letters to the Press.

S.W. London Br: Outdoor meetings at Earls Court from May to Sept. and help with speakers and lit. sellers at Hyde Park. The GLC Election was being contested and non-members fairly often attended the Branch.

Swansea Br: Small Branch with a good percentage turnout, but Swansea was very dead politically. Success with letters to the Press and to 'Any Answers'. There were now several members in Cardiff and the possibility of a group there.

Westminster Br: 59 members, some out of London and two new members. Canvassing continued with 4 to 5 doz. "S.S" per month. Outdoor meetings were held at Lincoln's Inn Fields and elsewhere and the G.L.C. Election was being contested.

W. Yorks. Br: The newest Branch, covering a large area of Yorkshire. So far Branch meetings had been just business meetings. Activities had included a propaganda tour with meetings in Bradford, the sale of "S.S" in bookshops, at demonstrations etc. and the publishing of letters in the local Press.

ITEM for DISCUSSION k) (S.W. London Br): "The inward-looking negative nature of this Conference Agenda. Is this not deplorable for a revolutionary Party of should be activists?"

Opening up, a S.W. London Br. delegate said this had been the Branch's view during discussion of the Agenda. We should not be perpetually dealing with internal controversies. Capitalism was in crisis and this was a gold opportunity for us and our Companion Parties in comparison with ten years ago when it was thought by many that capitalism could avoid depressions. Two delegates disagreed that depressions were times when Socialist knowledge would necessarily increase and thought the Item ~~was~~ itself inward-looking. Another delegate thought that some ideas had come up in the course of the Conference which would give food for thought, and Conference ended with a reminder from a delegate that whatever disagreements there had been, the Party had not had to argue political propositions since on that we were all united.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED at 5.50 p.m.